

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District

Other name/site number: n/a

2. Location

Street & number: MO Highway 185 and Meramec River

not for publication: n/a

City/town: Sullivan

vicinity: X

State: MO county: Franklin

code: 071

zip code: 63080

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-State

Category of Property: district

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National  
Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Emergency Conservation Work (E.C.W.) Architecture  
in Missouri State Parks, 1933-1942, Thematic Resources

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this   x   nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property   x   meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Date/

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sub: Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Rustic

Other Description:

Materials: foundation stone roof shingle  
walls stone other n/a  
wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

3. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: State.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : n/a

Areas of Significance: Architecture  
Conservation  
Entertainment/Recreation  
Politics/Government  
Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1934-1938

Significant Dates: n/a

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: National Park Service

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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☒ See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): n/a

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>666770</u>	<u>4230260</u>	B	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
C	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	D	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ☐ See continuation sheet.

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the broken line on the accompanying map entitled "Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District."

Boundary Justification: ☒ See continuation sheet.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Bonnie Stepenoff

Organization: Missouri Department of Natural Resources      Date: June 24, 1991

Street & Number: P.O. Box 176      Telephone: 314/751-4953

City or Town: Jefferson City      State: MO      ZIP: 65102

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 1

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The Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District is a Depression Era recreational facility developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Meramec State Park. Within the district boundaries, there are four contributing buildings, three contributing structures, one contributing object, and a total of four non-contributing buildings, structures, and objects. The facility was designed by National Park Service (NPS) landscape architects. Design and construction conformed to the tenets of rustic park architecture articulated by the NPS in the years before World War II. The picnic shelter, stone restrooms, and water fountain followed standardized plans for such structures. The pump house and stone steps are peculiar to this beach facility, although they clearly reflect the principles of rustic park architecture. Buildings and structures in the district embody the qualities of simplicity, durability, and compatibility with the natural environment that distinguish this style of construction. The buildings and their setting exhibit a high degree of integrity and convey a sense of history, while continuing to function as a recreational enclave within a popular state park.

Highway and bridge construction projects on Missouri Highway 185 posed a significant threat to these buildings and structures in 1984, at the time of the preparation of the thematic nomination of "Emergency Conservation Work (E.C.W.) Architecture in Missouri State Parks, 1933-1942, Thematic Resources." Because of the imminent danger of removal of the picnic shelter and other structures, this district was not included in that nomination. Upon completion of the new bridge and straightening of the highway, it became clear, however, that removal of the buildings would be neither necessary nor desirable and that the district had survived intact.

The Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District occupies a rugged tract of partially-forested bottom land that rises from the western bank of the Meramec River to the base of a steep wooded hill. A small clear stream meanders through the district, crosses the old beach, which has been partially reforested, and flows into the river. To the west of the stream, on the flat top of a low ridge, are two stone restrooms and the concrete foundation of an old bathhouse.<sup>1</sup> Rustic stone steps lead to the spot once occupied by the bathhouse. Another flight of stone steps leads to the restroom north of the bathhouse foundation. At the base of the hill, below the two restrooms, is a small stone drinking fountain that has been modified and reinforced with poured concrete.

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<sup>1</sup>Missouri State Park Board, "Meramec State Park Development Plan" (November 1938).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 2  
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To the east of these structures, on the opposite side of the stream is a low, sprawling, L-shaped stone picnic shelter. On a small hill, southwest of the shelter, is a rectangular two-story tower-like building that formerly served as a pumphouse. A pair of stone abutments are all that remain of an original footbridge that has been replaced with a modern wooden superstructure. This footbridge provided access from the picnic shelter to the old beach.

The only substantial non-contributing structure in this district is a modern wooden pit latrine located northwest of the picnic shelter near the park road. Another non-contributing structure is the low concrete bridge across the stream. A new drinking fountain has been installed near the shelter, and a new gravel parking lot has been created just west of the shelter.

With the exception of the pit latrine, all the buildings in the district are constructed of stone and wood in the sturdy, rustic style that characterized the work of the CCC, under NPS supervision, in state and national parks. Ancillary structures, such as the stone steps and bridge abutments, also reflect the labor-intensive, craftsmanlike qualities of rustic park architecture. In scale, color, and form, the buildings and structures harmonize quietly with their rugged natural setting in the Ozark hills. The most significant modern developments impacting this district have been the straightening of Highway 185 just north of the district boundary and the construction of a new bridge over the Meramec River to the northeast of the picnic shelter.

Buildings and structures that contribute to the historical character of the district are, as follows:

Me4 (Building #28) Shelter House (ca. 1934): This one-story L-shaped open shelter building of stone and wood construction, with flagstone floor, central stone fireplace, and recently-replaced cedar shingle roof, measures 84' on its longest (north) side. The sprawling building resembles substantial stone shelter buildings at Cuivre River State Park, Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park, and Lake of the Ozarks State Park, which have been listed on the National Register. Contributing building.

Me5 (Building #29) Pump House (ca. 1938): This small (8' x 10') rectangular, two-story building, with its first story of stone construction and its second story of wood construction, topped by a gable roof, rises on a small, mound-like hill above the narrow stream that wanders to the river. Its prominent placement and quaint tower-like form add character to the district. Contributing building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 3

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Me6 (Building #31) Restroom (ca. 1934): This sturdy rectangular (14' x 15') building is distinguished by walls constructed of irregular courses of dressed stone, a gabled entrance portico of the same stone construction, and a front-facing gable roof. The building is similar to stone restrooms at Dr. Edmund A. Babler Memorial State Park that have previously been listed on the National Register. State park crews have recently installed a new cedar-shingle roof. Contributing building.

Me7 (Building #32) Restroom (ca. 1934): Like Me6, this restroom is rectangular (16' x 18') and features irregularly coursed dressed stone on exterior walls and a distinctive gabled entrance portico. Contributing building.

Me8 Stone Steps (ca. 1934): Rustic steps constructed of dressed stone scale the steep grade from the beach area to the former entrance of the old bath house. Contributing structure.

Me9 Stone Steps (ca. 1934): Another flight of rustic stone stairs leads from the rugged banks of the small meandering stream to the restroom north of the old bathhouse foundation on the ridge top. Contributing structure.

Me10 Bridge Abutments (ca. 1934): Sturdy rock abutments survive beneath a new wooden superstructure on the footbridge leading from the beach area to the picnic shelter area. Contributing structure.

Me11 Water Fountain (ca. 1934): This type of plain sturdy rock-walled fountain is a trademark of CCC park development. Contributing object.

The following buildings and structures do not contribute to the historical character of the district:

Wooden pit latrine near the northern boundary, erected ca. 1980 and scheduled for removal. Noncontributing building.

Wooden footbridge, constructed ca. 1980. Noncontributing structure.

Concrete bridge over stream, constructed ca. 1989. Noncontributing structure.

Drinking fountain, west of picnic shelter; constructed ca. 1985.  
Noncontributing object.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District

Page 1

SUMMARY: Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District is significant under Criteria A and C as a Depression-Era recreational development that retains substantial integrity and contains eight properties that exemplify the type of rustic park architecture promoted by the National Park Service (NPS) prior to World War II. From 1934 to 1938, enrollees in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) constructed the beach and picnic complex under NPS supervision as part of a massive park development program. The Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District meets the requirements for registration established in "Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Architecture in Missouri State Parks, 1933-1942, Thematic Resources." The district is significant in the areas of architecture, conservation, entertainment/recreation, politics/government, and social history.

ELABORATION: One of the oldest facilities in the Missouri state park system, Meramec State Park was established in 1926. Because of its location in the spectacular Meramec Valley, the park attracted large numbers of visitors. However, the Missouri Game and Fish Commission did not develop the park to a significant extent before the Great Depression. The establishment of the CCC in the early 1930s made it possible to realize the park's recreational potential. The CCC-built Meramec State Park Lookout House/Observation Tower, Pump House, and Shelter House were previously listed in the National Register (1985).

One of the great attractions of the park is its access to the scenic Meramec River. The old beach area provided a bathhouse and restrooms for swimmers and a large picnic shelter for families and groups. While this area is no longer used as a swimming beach, picnickers and other park visitors find it an attractive and enjoyable leisure-time retreat.

Architecture

The buildings and structures in the district embody the characteristics of simplicity, ruggedness, and harmony with the natural landscape that are hallmarks of the rustic style of park architecture documented in Laura Souliere Harrison's Architecture in the Parks National Historic Landmark Theme Study.<sup>1</sup> Landscape architect Phoebe Cutler also discusses the style, which she calls "government rustic," in her monograph entitled Public Landscape of the

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<sup>1</sup>Laura Souliere Harrison, Architecture in the Parks National Historic Landmark Theme Study (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1986).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 2

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New Deal.<sup>2</sup> The picnic shelter, restrooms, and ancillary structures in this district are unusually good examples of this building style, which flourished during the Great Depression because of the availability of a large pool of labor, supervised by local craftsmen, and guided by firm architectural principles. The most important and comprehensive statement of these principles remains Albert H. Good's Park and Recreation Structures, published in 1935, revised in 1938, and reissued recently in reprint form.<sup>3</sup>

Conservation

Meramec State Park benefitted from the labor of several CCC companies. In addition to park construction, the CCC enrollees participated in forestry and flood control projects. In the beach area itself, CCC enrollees engaged in erosion and flood control activities. A 1934 flood damaged the bathhouse, which had already been erected as part of the park development project.<sup>4</sup>

Entertainment/Recreation

One of the primary aims of the New Deal conservation programs, including Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) in state parks, was to provide recreational opportunities for those people who could not afford to travel to distant locations and stay at commercial hotels and resorts.<sup>5</sup> The beach development at Meramec State Park provided opportunities for swimming, picnicking, and enjoyment of the outdoors at no charge to people of St. Louis and surrounding communities. This development was part of a pre-War movement toward democratization of recreation, inspired by the ideals of the Progressive Era and energized by the spirit of the New Deal.

Politics/Government

Initiation and completion of this beach development project depended upon a path-breaking partnership between the state and federal governments in

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<sup>2</sup>Phoebe Cutler, Public Landscape of the New Deal (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>Albert H. Good, Park and Recreation Structures (Washington, DC: GPO, 1938).

<sup>4</sup>F.A. Deckmeyer, Monthly Report for SP-3, April 1934.

<sup>5</sup>Cutler, pp. 70-75.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 3

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funding, planning, supervision, and mobilization of the necessary manpower. Missouri's state parks and conservation agencies cooperated with the NPS in planning and designing the project. The United States Army assisted in recruiting, housing, and supervising the young enrollees in the CCC.<sup>6</sup>

Social History

Opportunities for employment under the CCC program brought hundreds of thousands of young men from a variety of urban and rural backgrounds and many different ethnic groups together to live and work in army-style camps in remote locations throughout the United States. Some of these men learned skills that would serve them later in life. Some attended classes and earned high school diplomas. Many of these men and boys had been undernourished and in poor health at the time of enrollment. Monthly reports of their supervisors contained glowing accounts of weight gained and morale boosted by good food and outdoor activity.

Half a century later, many CCC veterans would remember their experience as a positive force in their lives. Orin Pardue, who spent some time at Meramec State Park, during his nine-year tenure as a CCC supervisor, reflected upon camp life in an interview in 1989. When asked if this was a positive experience, he replied:

Very definitely. To my way of thinking that was one of the greatest things that ever happened to the youth of our country.<sup>7</sup>

Remembering back to the early years of the Great Depression, he said:

I used to hear those kids talk among themselves. I'm talking about in the early days of the CCC. You know when Pretty Boy Floyd got killed at Union Station, those kids thought it was a terrible injustice. You know, then John Dillinger and all those guys, these men were heroes to these kids. The kids were right on the brink of becoming good citizens or criminals. The CCC kept a lot of those boys from becoming criminals. It was a lifesaver for them, a turning point in their lives.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Michael T. Chase, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Missouri: An Experiment in Civil-Military Cooperation" (University of Missouri-Kansas City: MA Thesis, 1977).

<sup>7</sup>Orin Pardue, interview with Bonnie Stepenoff (St. Louis, MO, January 10, 1989).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 1

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Chase, Michael T. "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Missouri: An Experiment in Civil-Military Cooperation." University of Missouri-Kansas City: MA Thesis, 1977.

Cutler, Phoebe. Public Landscape of the New Deal. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Deckmeyer, F.A., Superintendent SP-3. Meramec State Park, Sullivan, Missouri, Monthly Report for SP-3. National Park Service, April 1934 - February 1935. National Archives, Record Group 35.

Good, Albert H. Park and Recreation Structures. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1938.

Harrison, Laura Souliere. Architecture in the Parks National Historic Landmark Theme Study. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1986.

Missouri State Park Board. Meramec State Park Development Plan, November 1938.

Pardue, Orin. Interview with Bonnie Stepenoff. St. Louis, MO, January 10, 1989.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District Page 1  
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Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the shelter, pump house, restrooms, steps, bridge abutments, and water fountain that represent the most significant, unaltered concentration of CCC-related resources in this portion of the park. Adjacent portions of the park have been excluded because of loss of integrity due to construction and development associated with a maintenance facility.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Meramec State Park Beach Area  
Historic District  
Mo Highway 185 and Meramec R  
Sullivan Vicinity Franklin Co  
15/666770/4230260

7180 L SW  
(SPRING BLUFF)

91°07'30"  
38°15'

665000m E.

666

R. 2 W. | STANTON 2.7 MI.

T. 41 N.  
T. 40 N.

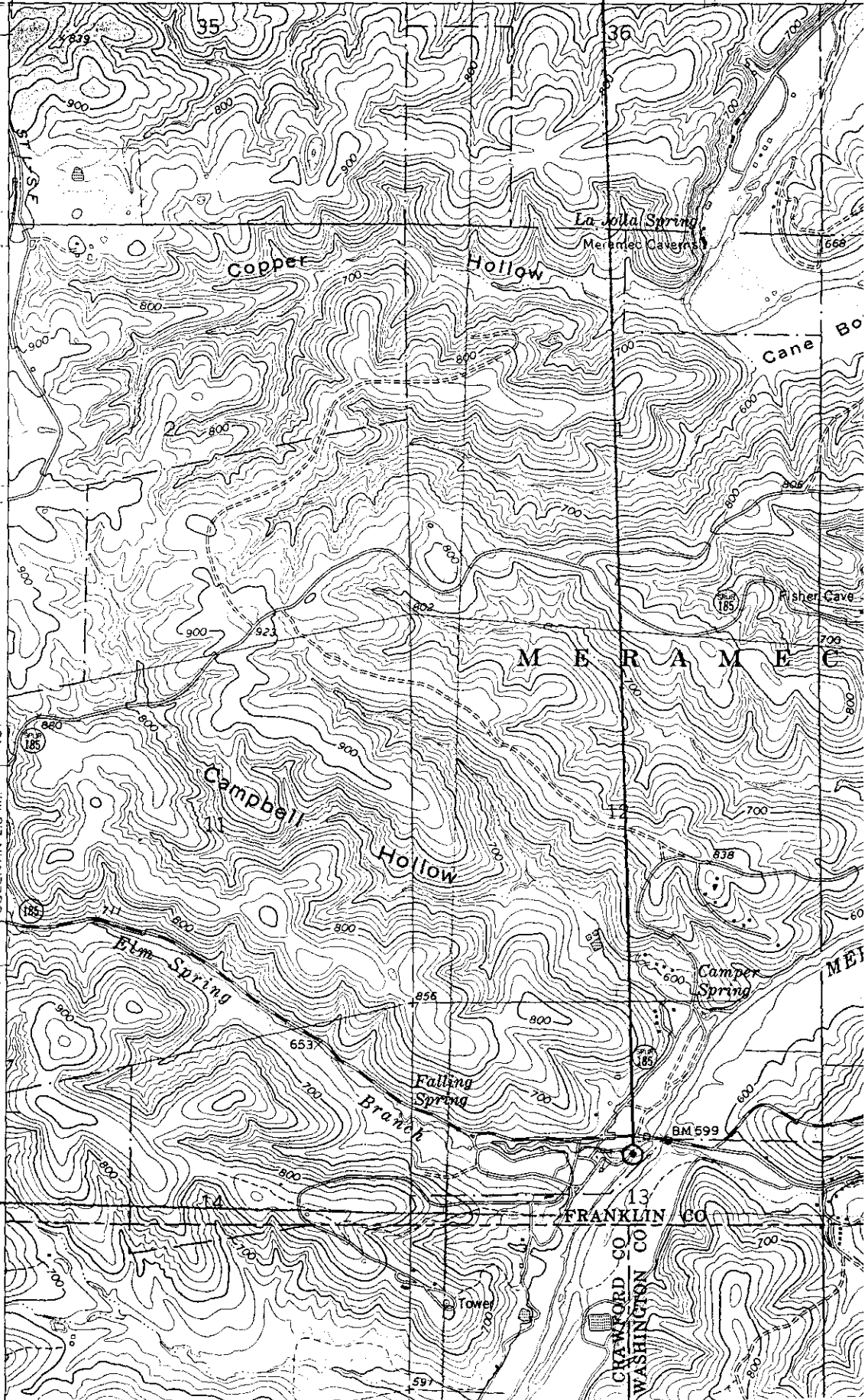
4233000m N.

4232

4231

12'30"

4230



Pump House and Shelter House  
Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, MO  
Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff  
Date: February 13, 1991  
Negative on file. MO Dept. of Natural Resources  
View looking east from top of stone steps.  
Number 1 of 8



Shelter House

Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District

Vicinity of Sullivan, MO

Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff

Date: February 13, 1991

Negative on file: Mo Dept. of Natural Resources

View looking northwest toward highway bridge (on left)

Number 2 of 8





Pump House

Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, MO

Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff

Date: February 13, 1991

Negative on file: MO Dept. of Natural Resources

View looking west (Restroom in background)

Number 3 of 8



Restroom (Building #32)  
Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, MO  
Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff  
Date: February 13, 1991  
Negative on file: MO Dept of Natural Resources  
View looking Southwest  
Number 4 of 8.





Restroom (Building # 32)  
Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, Mo  
Photographer: Bonnie Stropenoff  
Date: February 13, 1991  
Negative on file: Mo. Dept of Natural Resources  
View looking southeast  
Number 5 of 8



Restroom (Building #31) and stone steps  
Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, MO  
Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff  
Date: February 13, 1991  
Negative or file MO Dept of Natural Resources  
View looking west  
Number 6 of 8





Drinking Fountain  
Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, MO  
Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff  
Date: February 13, 1991  
Negative on file: Mo. Dept of Natural Resources  
View looking west  
Number 7 of 8



Bridge Abutment  
Meramec State Park Beach Area Historic District  
Vicinity of Sullivan, MO  
Photographer: Bonnie Stepenoff  
Date: February 13, 1991  
Negative on file: MO Dept of Natural Resources  
View looking northwest

